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## Bismillah Mohammadi, Interior Minister : Attacks to Intensify

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The Afghan interior minister warned on Sunday that militants, being aided by regional spy agencies and terrorist groups, could step up their attacks in the build-up to the Chicago summit in May.

Bismillah Mohammadi issued the warning while deposing before the Meshrano Jirga, or upper house of parliament, after the defense commission head, Ali Akbar Jamshidi, said the security situation in the country was fast deteriorating.

In a reference to recent coordinated assaults in Kabul and three eastern provinces, Jamshidi said the country's spy and detective services were weak to the extent that insurgents could easily reach their targets in major cities.

Senate Chairman Fazal Hadi Muslimyar, however, praised security forces for their bravery in beating back the assailants, though intelligence organs needed to be strengthened.

Mohammadi, who was summoned to brief lawmakers on the attacks, acknowledged security forces had no prior information. However, he claimed the attackers had been unable to reach their targets.

The minister said the government had long been urging the militants to join the peace process, but the rebels continued to choose war over reconciliation. The conflict would continue until the insurgents agreed to a ceasefire, he added.

As usual, he said, the guerrillas had intensified their attacks with the advent of spring and the country would face increased security threats until the NATO's Chicago meeting. The summit will focus on training and equipping Afghan security forces after 2014, when most of international troops are to leave the country.

Mohammadi said Afghan security forces had improved in terms of their combat skills over the past few years. "The Taliban cannot overrun an area -- no matter how much efforts they do..." Without going into details, Mohammadi said the rebels had support from regional intelligence agencies and terrorist groups.

About the presence of foreign troops, he said the Afghans could defend their country on their own and they had no objection if NATO-led soldiers left the country.

Mohammadi revealed that the elements involved in stealing salaries of police officials in eastern Nuristan province had been arrested. He did not elaborate. Last month, some government officials stole police salaries amounting to 21 million Afghanis.